The Washi

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A Good Treaty

President Johnson has rightly called the Space Pact "the most important arms-control development since the limited test-ban treaty of 1963." And like that treaty, its importance as a practical and immediate limitation on actions that might be harmful is matched by its contribution to the international climate.

The treaty shows that it is possible even for nations that greatly differ in opinion, to reach accord on very difficult and complicated limitations on their sovereignty. It reflects as well, a kind of vision that did not precede the development of thermonuclear arms. Here, the great powers are profiting by the earlier experience. They are taking advantage of the fact that it is easier to undertake agreements in the advance of the full development of a new factor of life than it might be afterward.

The treaty, of course, does a great deal more than limit the use of arms in outer space and on celestial bodies. It has a number of provisions that clarify the utilization of space itself and that, if adhered to, will preclude the arbitrary and unilateral initiation of space experiments that might alter the environment and adversely affect the interests of others.

This progress comes at a time when hopes for the collective solution of other disarmament proposals are very low indeed. It was badly needed to sustain faith in the outlook for any limitation of any sort. It is good to know that progress still is possible. The United States and the Soviet Union have persisted in the long and arduous effort until something has been achieved.

So the treaty can be applauded for the good that it has achieved as of today; and it can be praised for the larger good that it will do tomorrow when the practical aspects of space relations have become infinitely more pressing. The world surely will have occasion to look back to this day as one that set the nations on the right path and on which the great powers made a wise decision to shun the military exploitation of celestial bodies and of outer space for narrow, nationalistic purposes.